

STATEMENT OF SENATOR THAD COCHRAN
Conference Committee on the FY2009 Supplemental Appropriations Bill
June 11, 2009

Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased that we're meeting today to finalize this supplemental. It is important that we provide needed resources to the men and women who are serving in our military forces, and that we do so in a timely manner that does not compel the Department of Defense to delay procurements, or take other inefficient actions to support our troops.

It is a positive sign that we are meeting as a conference committee in the regular order, and I hope we will continue to resolve differences between the House and Senate on the individual FY2010 appropriations bills.

As a general matter, I think the proposed conference agreement represents a fair compromise between the House and Senate positions. I regret that some provisions that were in neither bill have apparently been added to the conference agreement.

Without casting judgment on whether the so-called "Cash for Clunkers" program is good policy, it is unfortunate that a new, billion-dollar program is being created without any opportunity for debate or amendment in the Senate. I know that there are two members (Collins and Feinstein) who had hoped to offer an alternative proposal during Senate consideration. I wish they and other Senators could be afforded that opportunity.

I am also told there is other new legislation dealing with the Federal retirement system that may or may not be part of the conference agreement. This is something we learned of only today. It apparently has significant impact on spending, but we know virtually nothing about it.

Addition of these new items makes the conference report vulnerable in the Senate, and may jeopardize our efforts to find the troops in a timely manner.

There may be other controversial issues that we'll discuss further today. The disposition of issues such as Guantanamo detainees, detainee photographs, and funding for the International Monetary Fund have all been difficult issues for this conference.

I thank the two distinguished Chairmen for their good faith efforts to reconcile the positions of the two bodies on these and other issues.